

MAKE RAPPERS RAP AGAIN: INTERROGATING THE MUMBLE RAP “CRISIS”

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AUTHOR BIO

Heidi R. Lewis is the David Lucile Packard Professor of [Feminist & Gender Studies](#) at [Colorado College](#), inaugural Editor-in-Chief of [Oxford Bibliographies in Gender & Women's Studies](#), Series Editor of [Expanding Frontiers: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality](#), and immediate past President of the [National Women's Studies Association](#). Her scholarship and teaching are primarily focused on feminism (emphasis Black Feminism), Hip Hop (emphasis Rap), and media studies. In addition to *Make Rappers Rap Again*, Lewis has published [In Audre's Footsteps: Transnational Kitchen Table Talk](#) (edition assemblage, 2021), as well as book chapters and articles in the second volume of [Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies](#), [Womanism Rising](#), [The Cultural Impact of Kanye West](#), the [Journal of Popular Culture](#), the [Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships](#), and [Unteilbar: Bündnisse gegen Rassismus](#). She has also contributed to [NewBlackMan](#), [NPR](#), [Ms.](#), [KRCC](#), [Bitch](#), and [Act Out](#) and given talks at Vanderbilt, the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, Portland State, the U.S. Olympic Committee, the Kampagne für Opfer Rassistischer Polizeigewalt, and many other organizations in the U.S., Canada, and Germany.

BOOK SUMMARY

Many critics claim Mumble Rap is not real Hip Hop (or the most authentic or pure), because mumble rappers are ignorant about Hip Hop history, disrespectful toward Hip Hop elders, too similar, unskilled, prone to rapping about nonsense, and too soft or feminine. Some critics have even declared Hip Hop dead (again). In *Make Rappers Rap Again: Interrogating the Mumble Rap “Crisis,”* which features an interview with DJ Drama, Heidi R. Lewis contrarily and perhaps controversially argue Mumble Rap is real Hip Hop. Relying primarily on discourse analysis, Lewis examines Mumble Rap's congruence with oft-forgotten or subjugated Hip Hop cornerstones like illegibility, melody, the DJ, and the subgenre, as well as the ways most mumble rappers practice citational and collaborative politics congruent with real Hip Hop. She also takes a critical approach to examining the Mumble Rap sound, arguing it's much more complicated than it's often characterized, especially concerning flow and production. To explain the subjugation of Mumble Rap, Lewis situates the subgenre as Southern and examines the ways it challenges dominant notions about real Hip Hop masculinity vis-à-vis mumble rappers' attention to the mental and emotional, drug use and addiction, and the fallacies of gender and sexuality norms. Last, but not least, she argues Hip Hop will never die.

PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before you read the text, consider thinking about and discussing your responses to the following questions: What do you know about Hip Hop and Mumble Rap? How do you

know what you know? How might that impact the way you engage with *Make Rappers Rap Again*? Do you think mumble rappers have or are killing Hip Hop? Why or why not? What do you know about Hip Hop Studies and discourse analysis? How do you know what you know? How might that impact the way you engage with the text? What are your expectations for this text? Why do you have those expectations? What might be some advantages and limitations of those expectations regarding how you might engage with the text?

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

While *Make Rappers Rap Again* is focused on Hip Hop and Mumble Rap, it encourages us to think critically about how we encounter, understand, and navigate change, especially change that results in intergenerational tensions. What are some of the ways you've encountered, understood, and navigated change—for better, worse, and in-between? How might you think differently about that now that you've read and discussed this text?

AUXILIARY MATERIALS

As you read *Make Rappers Rap Again*, you will almost certainly want to engage with its many multimedia aspects to augment your understanding of Lewis's analyses and formulate your own. As you read about Takeoff's use of enjambment and manipulation of syllables in chapter two, "'Not every song is that fuckin' simple!': The Mumble Rap Sound," you may want to listen to the track Lewis examines to substantiate her argument, Jim Jones's "We Set the Trends" (2022). As you read about Joe Budden's critiques of Mumble Rap in chapter four, "'I feel like it's no such thing as gender!': The Contours of Real Hip Hop Masculinity," you may want to listen to the episode of Complex's *Everyday Struggle* that Lewis analyzes to make her points. With the free [Make Rappers Rap Again](#) auxiliary website, which also features her interview with DJ Drama, Lewis ensures you won't have to spend hours on the Internet finding the primary sources she interrogates. In addition to chapter summaries, the website features user-friendly slideshows and playlists of the images, songs, and videos referenced and examined in each chapter.

During her two-year term as President of the National Women's Studies Association (2023-25), Lewis was also featured discussing the book in S1E7 of the Association's podcast, Feminist Frequencies. Click [here](#) to watch and/or listen to the episode (1h40m).